



Washington State Senate

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April 6, 2016

RECEIVED ON:

Dennis McLerran, Regional Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

APR 13 2016
DWW
EPA Region 10
Office of the Regional Administrator

Dear Regional Administrator McLerran,

I am greatly disturbed to learn that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is secretly funding a public advocacy campaign designed to make Washington farmers look bad. As you know, this issue recently came to light in press reports exposing EPA's funding of billboards advertising the "What's Upstream" activist campaign.

The What's Upstream campaign appears to be a deliberate effort to blame agriculture for water pollution, and to advocate for additional regulations to be placed on the industry. The campaign's website specifically calls for requiring 100-foot buffer zones around waterways. The website also urges readers to contact their elected officials. In sum, the What's Upstream website seeks to create the impression that Washington farmers are responsible for dangerous water pollution, that agriculture is not sufficiently regulated, and that members of the public should ask the government to fix an apparent problem.

The billboards, which were posted in Olympia and Bellingham, point viewers to the What's Upstream website but do not disclose EPA's involvement in funding the project. I appreciate that EPA now takes the position that the billboards do not comply with federal rules requiring disclosure of funding. But I remain concerned that EPA is using public dollars to aid in the promotion of a specific agenda which has the ultimate goal of pushing legislators to adopt new laws on a distinct issue.

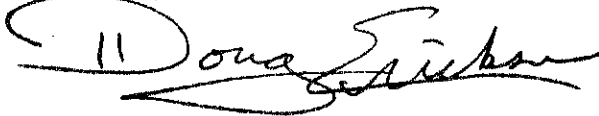
As a member of the Washington State Senate, I regularly meet with citizens who hold diverse viewpoints on environmental policy and agriculture. My experience meeting with members of the agriculture industry—both large and small—convinces me that the impression of Washington agriculture EPA is trying to create through the What's Upstream campaign is not accurate. Regardless of the merits of this or any other issue, however, it is always vitally important in the legislative decision-making process to know when an advocate may be using public funds to promote an idea. I urge EPA to improve its efforts around transparency in the future, so that I and other legislators will be fully informed of the agency's involvement in campaigns that relate to issues that may come before the state legislature for consideration.

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I am also requesting that you provide information showing how the What's Upstream campaign was approved for funding, who approved it, and whether the campaign will continue to receive funding even though problems have surfaced.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Erickson". The signature is written in a cursive style. To the left of the signature, the number "11" is circled in ink.

Senator Doug Erickson, Chair
Senate Energy, Environment and Telecommunications Committee

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